MEDICAL STUDENT NEWS

Incoming Medical Students Pledge to Serve Humanity During Virtual White Coat Ceremony

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The 2021 White Coat ceremony was held virtually via livestream

After a whirlwind of orientation and an intensive six-week block of classes called Ground School, this year's incoming class of UCSF medical students marked their rite of passage into the medical profession as part of a virtual White Coat Ceremony.

These 161 students come from a wide range of backgrounds and 53 percent are considered "underrepresented in medicine," more than ever before in the School of Medicine's history.

"We count on you to champion our goal of making UCSF the most diverse, equitable and inclusive academic medical system in the country, and to be a place where people from all backgrounds feel they belong and can be successful," UCSF School of Medicine Dean Talmadge E. King, Jr., MD, said to students during the ceremony.



Woodger Faugas

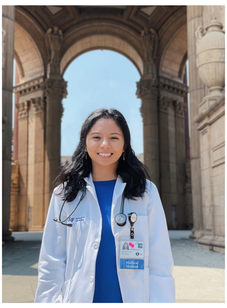
For Woodger Faugas, who immigrated from Haiti to the United States alone and undocumented as a 13-year-old, the white coat's symbolism is profound. The ceremony made him thankful for the people who have helped him along the way. "I felt a great deal of exhilarating, if not transcendental, gratitude —in having journeyed from Haiti to UCSF, with the help of so many supportive and amazing people," Faugas said.

Yensy Zetino came to the US at age 3 from El Salvador and was also undocumented. She grew up in the Bay Area and Stockton. Preventative care wasn't a focus for her family, Zetino said, and

utilizing the health care system was only part of a last case scenario. “A lot of my family didn’t have insurance, and didn’t want to miss work,” she said. “It wasn’t their top priority: their top priority was making sure their children had food and they were paying their bills on time.”

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> **Talmadge E. King, Jr., MD**
> Dean, UCSF School of Medicine

As a future physician, Zetino hopes to improve access to care for underserved populations. She is part of the PRIME-US program, a five-year track for students committed to working with urban underserved communities. Zetino was also part of the UCSF Postbaccalaureate Program, which prepared her to apply for med school and helped give her the confidence to succeed. “They guided me through the process because it would have been very confusing if I had done it alone.”



Alyssa Rivera

For Alyssa Rivera, a Filipino immigrant who grew up in Fresno, the white coat symbolizes her ability to represent a community. “[The white coat] represents the sacrifices of my ancestors and my family,” said Rivera, who is part of the San Joaquin Valley PRIME Program. Both her parents grew up in poverty, Rivera said. “My ultimate goal is to go back to Fresno and serve the community,” Rivera said. “That’s where the greatest needs are and where I can use my talents and have a greater impact.”

Youssef Sibih immigrated to the Bay Area from Egypt at age four with his parents. For Sibih, the white coat symbolizes his family’s struggle in building a better life for him in this country and is a reminder to be humble. “To become a physician is a privilege,” Sibih said. “I'm so honored and privileged to be a part of a cohort of bright individuals, and can't wait to see what this year and the future have in store for all of us.”



Yensy Zetino

Alicia Fernández, MD, professor of medicine and director of the Latinx Center of Excellence delivered the ceremony’s keynote speech. She noted how the white coat sets up a social compact

in which a patient entrusts their physician with their health and welfare, and the physician promises to do their best. “It’s how you treat people that will be the hallmark of the stories patients tell about their illness or the birth of their child,” Dr. Fernandez said.

She also called for changes to the health care system, and said physicians have a responsibility to make health care more accessible, inclusive, effective and affordable.



Youssef Sibih

President of the UCSF Medical Alumni Association Esteban G. Burchard, MD, welcomed incoming students on behalf of the alumni association and also encouraged students to be strong advocates for their patients and communities. “The white coat represents the knowledge, skill and integrity of our profession,” he said.

Students were virtually presented their white coats by Associate Deans Michelle A. Albert, MD, PhD; Peter Chin-Hong, MD; John Davis, MD, PhD; and Karen Hauer, MD, PhD.

Cindy Lai, MD led students and physicians in reciting the UCSF Physician Declaration, a commitment to serving humanity, caring for the sick, and alleviating pain and suffering.

View a recording of the 2021 White Coat Ceremony.

Research at Spring Inquiry Symposium

Faculty, Students, Trainees, and Staff

Community